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FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO WASHINGTON

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Your telegram No. 643 paragraph 2 [of March 13: Laos].

We do not accept this rather optimistic view of the military situation.

2. War Office assessment is that the Government's military situation has seriously deteriorated. Their troops have been driven from their position at Phou Soung. The Pathet Lao have indeed exploited their advantage by following up, dividing the Government troops and forcing them to withdraw North and South along Luang Prabang - Vientiane road. They have cut off the southern column by capturing Muong Kassy. Reinforcements and additional weapons are unlikely to counter-balance Government military ineptitude and badly shaken morale. War Office do not consider Pathet Lao have plans for any wider offensive yet e.g. capture of Luang Prabang or Vientiane. Their immediate objective is destruction of Government ability to conduct military operations against them. Further attacks on lines of communications are therefore probable.

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